

CHINESE ART SONGS IN 1920-1949: VOCAL PEDAGOGY AND SINGING TECHNIQUE

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Abstract

Chinese art songs have a history of one hundred years, and each art song reflects the historical, social, and cultural background of the time. The country will prosper as education prospers. Therefore, singing Chinese art songs can make students feel the richness and depth of Chinese Culture, enhance their cultural confidence, and spread Chinese art songs worldwide.

This article provides the history of Chinese art songs from 1920 to 1949, which are rich in musical uniqueness and character in the art songs. The vocal pedagogy of Chinese art songs and the example of Chinese art songs in that period present the style and the specific music culture developed in the past century.

Keywords: Chinese art song, vocal pedagogy, singing technique, Chinese music

Introduction

China's excellent traditional culture is the root and soul of the Chinese nation, a source of strength for solid cultural self-confidence, and the most profound national cultural soft power. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, "culture is the soul of a country and a nation. The destiny of the nation that flourishes with culture flourishes, and if the culture is strong and then the nation is strong." Culture plays an essential role in the prosperity of a country and the development of a nation. Chinese art songs are important carriers for the inheritance of Chinese Culture.

History and Development of Chinese Art Songs

"Art song is a specific vocal music genre derived from a popular lyric song in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Its basic characteristics are that the lyrics are mostly selected from the poet's famous works, focusing on the expression of the personal inner world, and beautiful and expressive tunes; the piano accompaniment is an integral part of the work and is integrated with singing. The work is interior, professional, and elegant taste." (Editorial Committee of Music Encyclopedia, Central Conservatory of Music, 2014) "Art song is another name for the solo ballad. It is a typical work of art created by excellent composers. It generally refers to the popular vocal music genre from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century. It is a romantic combination of poetry and music, emphasizing the importance of piano accompaniment." (Meng & Xu (2018). Therefore, art songs generally have the following four characteristics:

1) Lyrics of literary poems or famous poets; 2. Most of them are composed for professional singing (folk singing and bel canto singing); 3. Accompaniment (mainly piano, but sometimes adding other instruments) and voice are equally important; 4. It is the expression of personal feelings. Art songs are more introverted and delicate than aria, which requires a singer to have perfect control of his voice and unique opinions on poetry and music. Therefore, we often hear that art songs are the touchstone of a singer's singing skills and musical accomplishment. The origin of China's art songs can be traced back to the first half of the 20th century, which is based on the German and Austrian art songs "poetry, music, piano accompaniment trinity" to complete the creation of Chinese art songs. In the early stage, Chinese art songs were the product of the integration of Western music and then gradually formed their art songs with national cultural characteristics.

"Art song" is usually mentioned for foreign artistic songs, such as Schubert, Debussy, Bellini, Tchaikovsky, etc. It is perfectly normal because art songs originated in Germany in the 19th century, written by composers with great skill and accompanied by piano. Art songs like Schubert's "A Die Musik," "Die Forelle," "Erlkonig," Schumann's art songs "Widmung," and Brahms's "Wiegenlied" these art songs are called "Lied" (plural Lieder); And then, in France, songs in the same form as Lied were called "Mélodie"; In fact, every country has its art songs. Chinese art songs started late, in the early 1920s, after

the school music important music genre. Since the early part of the 20th century, a group of musicians returned from overseas study with the Spirit of the May Fourth Movement (Patriotism, Progress, Democracy, Science) and borrowed western art song forms, composing a large number of "Chinese art songs" for both ancient poetry and vernacular poetry. Chinese art songs have a history of one hundred years since the first Chinese art song, "The Great River Goes east," by Qingzhu. China is an ancient civilization with a long history and splendid culture. Every art song reflects the characteristics of that era so that we can understand the historical background, social background, and cultural background of that era according to the music works created by lyricists and composers.

The 1920s to 1940s was the first golden age of Chinese art songs. At that time, China was still a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. The war was filled with fighting for years, and foreign powers' invasion made people's lives turbulent. China experienced two major historical changes during this historical period, the democratic revolution and the National Liberation War. The people were under fire and living in poverty. The National Conservatory of Music (Shanghai Conservatory of Music) was established simultaneously. Many returned musicians such as Xiao Youmei, Zhao Yuanren, Qing Zhu, Huang Zi, Nie Er, and Tan Xiaoling created many excellent art songs for the national voice. The created works of China have a high academic and artistic value. Many songs are on vocal music teaching materials in music college and the concert. It fully proves that the importance of the composers and their works of this period, at the same time as the late art song creation, has an important role in learning and guidance.

In his "Centennial Tour of Chinese Art Songs," Feng Changchun mentioned the period of the "May Fourth" New Culture Movement. In Qingzhu art song, it is not difficult to find his careful speculation and bold creation of Western art songs; From Zhao Yuanren's "New Poetry Collection," we have seen a high degree of combination of new musical forms and new poetry language. The exploration of national style has been revealed in Zhao Yuanren's song creation. These art songs created for contemporary poetry have become a new cultural era. The vivid portrayal of it, from form to content, has become a symbol of the new era, the spirit of the new youth, and the pursuit of art. The creation of art songs during the "May Fourth" period has accumulated

experience for music creation in the next historical stage and created new music and artistic atmosphere.

The creation of art songs during the period of anti-Japanese national salvation, on the one hand, inherited the characteristics of the "May Fourth" period with the enlightenment and aesthetic color of new music; "The dual-theme expansion. In terms of creative techniques, compared with the "May Fourth" period, the musical language of art songs in this period was more mature, and more emphasis was placed on the national style of music.

During the Liberation War, the decline of art song creation lasted until a long historical period after 1949. The main reason for this situation was the restriction and influence of literary and artistic policies and music trends. However, it is also gratifying that art songs did not become a blind spot for music creation after the founding of New China. Under the new historical conditions, the content and musical style of art song creation is very different from past ones. Still, the aesthetic purpose of pursuing the national style of music has been further developed (Feng, 2020).

Chinese Art Songs in 1920-1949

The style and uniqueness

1. Compositions with the background of the times:

Art songs are no longer "spring and snow" but an important artistic carrier that inspires the spirit and expresses feelings. The appearance of art songs is closely related to the social reality at that time. Influential composers in the history of modern Chinese music almost all expressed their determination and patriotic feelings in the war of resistance through art songs. Art songs have genuinely become "cannons hidden in flowers" and played an irreplaceable role—the function of the psychic weapon.

Zhao Yuanren's "Teach Me How Not to Think about Him" has been sung today. Most of these art songs with new poems as lyrics embody the progressive spirit of democracy, equality, fraternity, and freedom during the "May Fourth" period.

Lu Huabai's "Hometown" was created in the winter of 1937. The first stanza of the work depicts the hometown's beautiful scenery, and pleasant mood before the invaders' iron hoofs stepped in. The hometown and the author's

extremely angry heart and the desire to return to the hometown simultaneously express the poet and composer's vision of victory in the war of confrontation. The whole music is mainly built based on the pentatonic mode. The transformation of the method has the alternating characteristics of the relative major and minor and the characteristics of the same palace system, which has a distinctive national style.

The song "The Ballad of the Great Wall" was composed in 1937. The movie playwright Pan Yannong completed the lyrics of the movie script "Guanshan Wanli" and the episode "The Ballad of the Great Wall" for Yihua Film Company and invited Liu Xue'an to compose the music for it. Later, due to the outbreak of the "August 13" War of Resistance in Shanghai, "the film was not made, but this episode was preserved. From the historical background at that time, because it described the suffering of the people who were forced to go into exile, it was able to touch people's heartstrings and inspire the national spirit of the same hatred.

2. The use of pentatonic tones and Chinese dialects:

Liu Xue'an's art songs are composed of rich topics; the structure of the songs is simple and exquisite. While focusing on the artistry of the works, he strives to be close to the masses; he widely uses the national pentatonic and folk tones for the creation and perfectly combines Western composition theory with Chinese traditional music. For example, "Spring Night in Luocheng Wendi" E Gong + Bian Gong (Six Tones E Gong), another example is the song "Red Bean Poem," which is superb in creation. It is a Six Tone Yu Mode+ Bian Gong with Western Minor Colors ", obviously using traditional Chinese composition techniques, while "minor mode" is Western. This song is a combination of national style and European techniques. Left us with one of the few but classic art songs.

Jiang Dingxian's "A Long Time" has been sung today because of the quality of art songs. The work is a single-phrase (change and repeat) structure with intro and coda, a pentatonic melody, and the middle is transferred to the same Gong system to show the mode contrast between the three phrases. Still, the accompaniment the harmonic configuration is typical of traditional Western harmony.

The whole music of "Hometown" composed by Lu Huabai is mainly based on the pentatonic mode. The transformation of the method has the

characteristics of alternation of relative major and minor and the characteristics of the same Gong system, which has a distinctive national style.

Tan Xiaolin's artistic song creation mainly focuses on the years he studied in the United States and the short two years he returned to teach at the National Music Academy. Tan Xiaolin's art song creation was unique at the time. He brought Hindemith's modern composition techniques to the country through the genre of art songs. Although his art song creation started as early as during his stay in the United States, his works produced a certain degree of success. The influence was after he returned to the country. In Hindemith's theory of harmony, the concept of mode was disintegrated, Hindemith calculated 12 semitones according to the principle of overtones, and these 12 semitones belonged to the same tonal family. The distance between the 12 tones is based on the distance between them and the starting tone. Although there is no tonal center, there will be a "center tone" in the progress of the music. Hindemith believed that three or more tones with different pitches sounded at the same time to form a chord, arranged in the order of overtones, and the purity and clarity of the different intervals formed by the distance from the starting sound became more distant with the distance. Gradually decreasing, "harmonic ups and downs" of different tensions are formed during the music, and "harmonic ups and downs" have become an important means of expressing different emotions and emotions. The above-mentioned creative techniques are clearly permeated in Tan Xiaolin's art songs, but at the same time he skillfully integrates pentatonic tones into the above-mentioned techniques, with a distinct national style. For example, in "Penglangji", G is the center tone.

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is for the voice, starting with a rest, followed by a dotted quarter note, a dotted eighth note, and a dotted sixteenth note. The lyrics are: 扁舟去作江南客, 旅. The bottom staff is for the piano, with dynamics marked as *mp* (mezzo-piano). The piano part features sustained notes with grace notes and a bass line. The score is in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one flat.

Figure 1 Penglangji

Source: Collection of Chinese art songs in 100 years's volume 3: Eventful years

Zhao Yuanren pays great attention to the relationship between lyrics and music. His outstanding feature is that the tone of the Chinese language and the rotation of the songs are closely matched and complement each other. Some works are even composed in dialect tones, such as "Bao Bu Yao," composed in Wuxi dialect tones, and Zhao Yuanren's "Vase of Flowers" melody. In classical Chinese poems, the Changzhou poetry tune is directly quoted. Using *colla voce*, multi-tone, and portamento to tune the poem at a free speed, and in the first paragraph, many floral and portamento are used. The free speed deliberately highlights the elements of traditional Chinese music.

3. The visual description of the accompaniment

At the beginning of the piano accompaniment of Huang Zi's "Chun Siqu," there are only 12 eighth notes in the right hand, which marks the piano's weak start and marks the "sempre delicato" which is always weak. Therefore, the piano accompaniment should be very soft, and the neat and soft "triplets" will vividly reproduce the sound of the night rain.

At the beginning of "I Live at the Head of the Yangtze River," the piano accompaniment uses the sixteenth note's rapid decomposition of the chord pattern as the creative texture. The "head" of the sextuplet is in the left hand, and each beginning note in the left-hand forms a melody, which echoes and sets off the singing melody. The right hand is used as accompaniment in the shape of flowing water, which describes the rolling state of the Yangtze River. Example



Figure 2 I Live at the Head of the Yangtze River

At the lyric "a strong wind, snow waves on the bow(一阵大风,雪浪上船头)", there is a strength prompt "crescendo crescendo" in the vocal part, indicating that the wind is blowing more and more, until the lyric "snow(雪)" reaches the peak of the whole song's strength "f", When performing, the singer must realize this change in intensity, give more passion, and cannot sing too plainly or suddenly intensify the intensity. On the piano part, tremolo is used to describe the raging "wind(风)", and the upward arpeggio depicts the "snow wave(雪浪)" constantly hitting the bow, which is vivid.

4. Compose music by word

In the use of sound, the word "live(住)" in "try to make myself drunk in order to let the spring stay with me.(试来把酒留春住)" and the word "indite(赋)" in "there is a strong desire to climb the top of the mountain to indite a poem(强欲登高赋)" are both carried out with the use of appoggiatura, with the addition of pure four-degree down-moving forward appoggiatura. If we remove the forward rhythmical tones of these two words, it's easy to make "live(住)" and "indite(赋)" oblique sounds into Ying ping (1st tone), and it becomes other meaning. In "try to make myself drunk in order to let the spring stay with me.(试来把酒留春住)", the word "come(来)" is used as Yang ping (2nd tone), and Huang Zi adds the auxiliary sound of a group of f in the small character of the third degree here. If this auxiliary sound is removed here, it will be difficult to express the word "come" clearly. The character "ask(问)" in "Ask Spring without language(问春无语)", through the use of descending minor third, accurately expresses the pronunciation. Just imagine if there is no processing of descending minor third here, it can not accurately express the pronunciation of the vocal music work "Dianjiangchun: Go up to the attic and write a poem", which combines the bold and graceful poetry with the ups and downs of the music melody

5. Rhetoric is used in the creation

"Words of the Swallow" was written in the 1930s. It is short in length, but its connotation is very profound. The lyrics personify the swallow and express the people's sadness at the time for the broken homeland through the mouth of the swallow. Judging from the current situation, Shanghai has been turbulent since the January 28 Incident, and the people have been displaced in the tragic situation of the country's loss. Huang Zi and Wei Hanzhang witnessed the desolation of people's livelihood during the war with their own eyes, and their deep concern for the country and the people is contained in this song.

"Clear Flow" is lyrical by the scene, and the flowing water is used as a metaphor for the passage of time so that the singer and the audience cherish the time and understand the principle that "every inch of time is worth an inch of gold."

"Words of the West Wind" is an anthropomorphic song. In the children's song, West Wind is like a kind and kind old grandfather, saying hello to the children who have been away for a year and saying warm and encouraging words. It contains profound scientific truth. Everyone knows that the west wind is synonymous with "autumn" in the south of the Yangtze River. Whenever the west wind blows, the golden autumn will come. Now it's the harvest season again, and Grandpa Xifeng is here again. He sees the children who are getting fatter and taller. Grandpa Xifeng kindly asked, "Do you remember that the lotus flowers in the pond turn into lotus pods in autumn?" Then he told the children humorously, "Don't worry that there will be fewer flowers in autumn because I will dye the leaves bright red." Tell us that time flies so fast, and let us cherish it.

6. The vocal melody will appear more or less in the accompaniment part

Liu Xue'an chose a single and straightforward musical structure, which he believes is conducive to expressing simple musical themes and ideas and is easy for the public to accept and sing. "A Spring Night in Luocheng Wen Flute" uses a one-piece format. The melody of the left hand of the piano accompaniment and the singing part is almost the same, but one octave lower (example). Even if the piano's left-hand does not give the melody, the right hand will also provide it. So the singer has a good grasp of the pitch.

Vocal Pedagogy of Chinese Arts Song

In recent years, Chinese art songs by scholars in research and its development, creation, singing, and aesthetics, and there are many singers

singing performances. Still, public acceptance has been in a tepid state. It found that the present Chinese art song in vocal music teaching in school has the following four problems:

1. Insufficient research in linguistics :

The art songs understood by everyone are generally regarded as Italian art songs, German art songs, French art songs, Russian art songs, and so on, but few people will think that they are Chinese art songs. For Bel Canto, students in art high schools, music colleges, and normal colleges are all learning foreign singing methods and foreign cultures. Let's take the music college as an example. Students start with the Italian song collection in the first year of college and only get to know German and French art songs in the second and third years. They feel that they mainly sing foreign works and Chinese works are complementary. a e i o u, while China's language is complex, many Chinese phonetic components are composed of initials, finals, and tones. The initials are roughly equal to the consonants. Vowels can be roughly divided into the vowel, then the vowels of Chinese have 39. Hence, such a contrast came out, the Italian five vowels, 39 Chinese vowels. Learning and singing Chinese art songs will be much more difficult for vocal music beginners. So because of this problem, we educators need to think about what kind of music should be given to students in different grades to learn.

2. More in-depth study is needed in the music historiography of Chinese art songs :

With the continuous development of technology and the mutual integration of Chinese and Western cultures, students are most exposed to the pop music of today's countries. Students are madly chasing BlackPink, BTS, Justin Bieber, Ed Sheeran, and Billie Eilish, and they like their outrageous music. By contrast, Chinese art songs are more traditional and introverted and are not popular. Nowadays, more and more fast-food culture, such as Fast Man, The Voice, Super Girl, and other entertainment programs, Douyin, Xiaohongshu, Weibo, and so on, make children less and less willing to take the time to understand Chinese art songs deeply, but only to sing the music on the surface. Without delving into the background of creating art songs and the stories behind the songs. Once the students understand the composer's creative background and lyricist's creative inspiration, they will naturally be interested in singing Chinese art songs. They can also combine their own experiences for a second creation. Teachers should not only pay attention to the vocal music skills

and ignore the deep knowledge of the background of the song, of course but also understand the history and culture, enrich their cultural heritage. Only in this way can lead students interpret every Chinese art song in the right way.

3. Insufficient attention is paid to the analysis of aesthetics and culture of the Chinese art songs :

Excellent culture and art are indispensable spiritual food for human beings, and vocal music, as an important culture and art, has a subtle influence on human life. Songs are an important carrier for people to convey and express their emotions. The reason why excellent art songs can spread So far, they must have expressed the aspirations of most people at that time, and they also reflected the characteristics of that era. As vocal musicians, we need to strengthen our in-depth understanding of the stories behind the songs and the cultural value of the art songs themselves so that students can be deeply aware of the cultural origins of Chinese art songs to improve their cultural literacy.

4. Difficulty in applying Bel Canto to Chinese art songs:

The singer's basic skills are indispensable to singing Chinese art songs well. Only the singer has nearly perfect voice skills and rich emotional expression ability to express the idea of the composer and lyricist fully. Generally speaking, folk singing and bel canto singing can perform Chinese art songs. Folk singing singers are suitable for folk style art songs or opera and quyi style art songs, while those who learn bel canto singing are suitable for art songs with a wide range and rich timbre changes. Bel canto: a style of opera or opera singing in the 19th century in which producing a beautiful tone was considered very important. Folk singing: It is a singing art created and developed by the Chinese people of all nationalities according to their habits and hobbies. Folk singing includes Chinese opera singing, rap-singing, song singing, and new folk singing. With Bel Canto singing art songs and opera sounds are different. This difference in timbre, volume, articulation, skills, and so on has a lot of attention. Many returned students sing foreign aria art songs very well, but it isn't easy to sing local art songs or opera excerpts. The audience's response is not very good, mainly because they can't hear, the meaning and emotion are difficult to grasp accurately, Bel Canto singing has many advantages. Using bel canto to help singers sing Chinese art songs well has become an important topic.

5. Singing psychology of the students needs to be strengthened :

From the perspective of educational psychology, senior high school students are in the middle of youth (15-18 years old), which is the most

important period of students' physical and mental development. They are in the transition stage from children to adults. In many people's eyes, students in this age group have difficulty getting along. They are rebellious. The mood is also erratic. Right now is happy, and the next second is uncomfortable, easily swinging from one extreme to the other. They are emotional and passionate. So we need to be more caring, patient, and supportive to emotionally sensitive people.

High school is a critical period in which students' values of world life and people are gradually shaped. And the growth environment of modern high school students lacks many of the necessary links, such as music education or life values education, and so on. As one of humankind's most ancient, most impressive art forms, music is indispensable to human spiritual life content. It contains rich cultural and historical connotations, its unique artistic charm, and the long-term development of human beings.

Good music education for senior high school students is the main way to implement aesthetic education in schools and the most effective means to solve the health problems of teenagers. The study of Chinese art songs plays an active role in the mental health of senior high school students. However, teachers should be cautious in choosing Chinese art songs for students with different singing abilities. Teachers need to know about each student's learning ability and the learning situation. Each student's strengths and the things that need improvement, and then choose a suitable art song, according to understanding all the situation, for the student to sing. Only in this way, students singing psychology to get good protection, if let a singing foundation weak students sing a difficult art song, this must make him lose their confidence to sing. So the teacher to arrange songs for students should grasp the principle of step by step, from simple to difficult, we can not eagerly achieve step by step learning. Only in this way can students enjoy music and realize the inner power of music to bring their own.

Then we educators can improve according to the above five areas and hope to make great progress in all aspects shortly through continuous learning and improvement. In this way, students and teachers will become increasingly interested in Chinese art songs, more willing to explore, and more and more willing to sing. Excellent traditional culture has been carried forward.

Discussion

General Secretary Xi Jinping said, "In the new journey of accelerating the modernization of education, we will cultivate new people of the era who will take the responsibility of national rejuvenation! If education is prosperous, the country will be prosperous, and if education is strong, the country will be strong!" Students should strengthen their cultural self-confidence, sing more Chinese art songs, and promote Chinese traditional culture. The teacher should teach students the truth, goodness, and beauty in the classroom so that students can establish the correct three views; sing ancient poems and songs, learn Chinese history and feel the profoundness of Chinese culture. Chinese art songs play an important role in the vocal music teaching of secondary vocational schools in China. Vocal music educators should teach students according to their aptitude and vocal skills, and abilities and choose suitable songs for teaching. This will not only improve the students' ability. The students' singing ability and appreciation ability can also enhance the national cultural confidence of the students. A robust youth is a strong country, and children are the country's future, so it is essential to integrate ideological and political concepts into the vocal music teaching at the adolescent stage. High school is an important stage for determining students' outlook on life, values, and world outlook. The ideological and political education concept in Chinese art songs helps students form strong patriotism and enhance their cultural self-confidence. Learning to sing Chinese art songs improves the students' musical and cultural accomplishment, enriches their training materials, and makes them more interested in singing Chinese art songs. When the students change from being interested in singing to loving singing their own country's art songs, the students will be able to It will become a promoter of Chinese art songs and push classic Chinese art songs to the world.

So how to sing Chinese art songs better? Then we educators should make up for the deficiencies of the previous vocal music education as soon as possible through continuous learning. Another is to improve the singing technique. How to improve the singing technique is that we need to understand the following six aspects:

1. The background of the work (theme content, creative background, background of the composer and lyricist);
2. The technique of the work itself (melody, rhythm, harmony, combination of lyrics and music);

3. Singing (breath, phrases, complex skills, vocal music, articulation);
4. Stage performance and cultural, psychological requirements (psychological speculation of the characters in the song and the performance of the singer's body language);
5. Aesthetics (music sense, music mood control);
6. Comparison of the outstanding performance of different singers for the same work

Only through such a comprehensive understanding of an art song can students better interpret each piece. As a result, Chinese art songs are no longer difficult for students but are enjoyed by both the refined and the popular.

Gong Jingyi (2020) said it is similar to mine in that each vocal piece is composed of two parts: "dominant factors" and "recessive factors." The "dominant factor" refers to the "music" and "text" presented on the score of vocal music, namely the two parts of "musical score" and "song." The score also includes two parts: the singing melody score and the piano accompaniment score: "Hidden factor" refers to the content that the score of the vocal work cannot present, and its extension covers: category, creative background (composer and lyricist)), lyrics content background, region, style, etc. Different works contain different content.

The "recessive factors" point out a general idea and direction for the "musical expression" of vocal works. Through the operation and cooperation with the details of each specific knowledge point in the "dominant factor," the singer's interpretation and expression of the musical, emotional content of the vocal work is more comprehensive, reasonable, and vivid.

Conclusion

This article led us to discover that learning an art song well is not as simple as imagined. It is not that you can sing art songs well if you know the score and have a voice. It requires you to understand all aspects of the song to understand music thoroughly, and then you can perform well on stage. However, as long as you are willing to take the time and experience to explore each art song, I believe that each song will teach you a lot of knowledge. It may let you learn what happened in that era. It may also let you learn some philosophy of life. In short, it always has surprises for you who love to learn.

The dissemination and learning of Chinese art songs in primary and secondary schools, colleges, and society can make the public feel the charm of traditional Chinese culture. Students and the public can improve and shape their characters, and at the same time, they can subtly cultivate their own unique aesthetic and artistic sentiment, which is in line with their values. Integration achieves the goal of "promoting the excellent traditional Chinese culture."

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